DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 425 564 EC 306 607

AUTHOR	Gilmore, Dana Scott; Butterworth, John
TITLE	Work and Home: Data from the National Health Interview Survey on Disability. Research/Practice.
INSTITUTION	Children's Hospital, Boston, MA. Inst. for Community Inclusion.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration on Developmental Disabilities (DHHS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1997-11-00
NOTE	4p.
CONTRACT	90DN0032
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute for Community Inclusion/UAP, Developmental Evaluation Center, Children's Hospital, 300 Longwood Ave., Boston, MA 02115; Tel: 617-355-6506; TTY: 617-355-6956; Web site: http://www.ici@1.tch.harvard.edu
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adults; Cerebral Palsy; *Developmental Disabilities; *Employment Patterns; *Employment Statistics; Epilepsy; *Incidence; *Income; Labor Force; Mental Retardation; National Surveys; Private Sector

ABSTRACT

This issue brief provides a national profile of individuals with developmental disabilities based on the National Health Interview Survey on Disability, Phase 1. This in-depth survey of 107,400 individuals uses a complex sampling strategy which is designed to provide national incidence estimates for each survey item. Data are reported which were made available in July of 1996. Findings indicate: (1) .1 percent has cerebral palsy, .29 percent has epilepsy, and 38.26 percent has other chronic conditions; (2) almost 90 percent of respondents with mental retardation reported living with a relative, much higher than other groups; (3) on average, 29 percent of people with disabilities reported work as their major life activity, as compared to 62 percent of the entire population; (4) the percent of respondents who worked was consistent across the disability groups at approximately 29 percent, with 67 percent identifying themselves as not in the labor force; (5) 77.8 percent of those working in all disability groups worked for private companies, and 15 percent worked for government bodies; and (6) respondents with mental retardation had the highest percentage of any group with a household income below the poverty threshold. (CR)

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Work and Home: Data from the National Health Interview Survey on Disability

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Research Practice

By
Dana Scott Gilmore and John Butterworth

November 1997

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Introduction

Since fiscal year 1985 the Institute for Community Inclusion has monitored trends in day and employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities. Data sources have included surveys of state MR/DD agencies, secondary analysis of the RSA 911 data tapes, and surveys of community rehabilitation service providers. These data rely on state agencies or service providers that deal exclusively with people with disabilities. While they provide an index of how service system resources are being used, they do not provide such simple information as an estimate of overall employment for people with developmental disabilities. This Research-to-Practice provides a national profile of individuals with developmental disabilities based on the National Health Interview Survey on Disability, Phase I.

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) has been in existence since 1957. This in-depth survey of over 100,000 individuals uses a complex sampling strategy which is designed to provide national incidence estimates for each survey item. In 1994 a disability follow-back questionnaire, the NHIS-D, was added to the NHIS. The data was collected in two phases, over two years, 1994 and 1995. In 1994 of the 107,400 people receiving the master survey some 44,500 reported having some form of disability, impairment, or chronic health condition. Phase I of the NHIS-D provided information on the individual's reported condition as well as summary information on variables that include household composition, family resources, employment status, and living situation. The follow-back survey, Phase II, included much more information on items such as housing and long-term care services, work history/employment, vocational rehabilitation, assistive devices/technology, and community services.

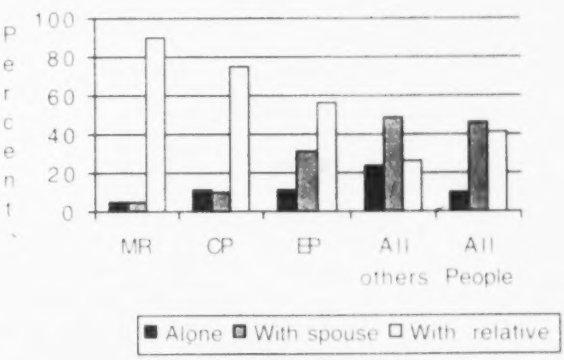
The data reported here are from the Phase I of the NHIS-D (the only data currently available), which were made available in July of 1996. The data, as presented here, are divided into: people with mental retardation (MR), cerebral palsy (CP), epilepsy (EP), and all other chronic conditions included in the NHIS-D (Other). The first three categories of developmental disability comprise 2.5% of the NHIS-D population, and 1% of the total NHIS population. The national prevalence, as calculated from the survey, of each item is included for comparison (all people).

Findings

NHIS Population Estimates

	Total (U.S. Population)	Percent of U.S. Population
MR	1,561,966	.6
CP	261,487	.1
EP	747,405	.29
Other	99,356,846	38.26

Living Situation



- Almost 90% of respondents with mental retardation reported living with a relative, much higher than any other group.

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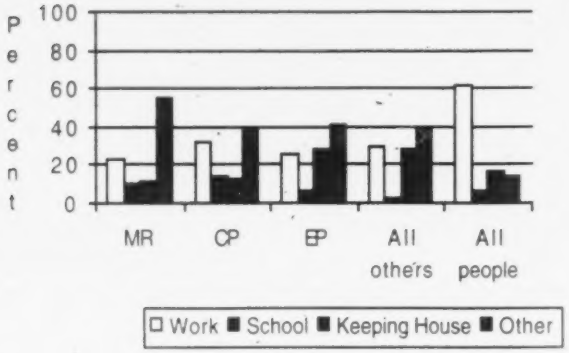
Major Life Activity: Respondents 18 and older



- On average, 29% of people with disabilities reported work as their major life activity, as compared to 62% of the entire population.

Work status in the Last 2 Weeks

	MR	CP	EP	Other	All People
Worked	28.6	31.7	27.5	28.8	63.7
Looking for Work	4.6	1.7	1.4	2.2	4.3
Not in Labor Force	66	66.6	70.7	66.8	32.0

- The percent of respondents who worked was consistent across the disability groups at approximately 29%, with 67% identifying themselves as not in the labor force.
- 77.8% of those working in all disability groups worked for private companies, and 15% worked for local, state, or federal government.

Percent of Respondent Households Above or Below the Poverty Threshold

	MR	CP	EP	Other	All People
At or above	57.9	68.8	57.1	71.9	80.1
Below	31.3	20.7	29.3	17.9	12.4
Don't know	10.8	10.5	13.6	10.2	7.5

- Respondents with mental retardation had the highest percentage of any group with a household income below the poverty threshold.

Summary

These data provide a broad perspective on the employment status and life circumstances of individuals with developmental disabilities and the total population of individuals with chronic health conditions or disabilities. Less than 30 % of respondents with mental retardation were working in the past two weeks at the time of this survey, paralleling the poor employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities found in other sources. The data also suggest that families that include a member with a developmental disability tend to have a higher incidence of poverty, and that individuals with mental retardation, in particular, are highly dependent on family members for living support. As Phase II of the NHIS-D becomes available, more detailed analysis of the personal and system-based support structures for individuals with disabilities will be possible.

Reference

1. National Center for Health Statistics (1996). National Health Interview Survey on Disability, Phase I. Department Of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Hyattsville, MD: Author.

This is a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion which is supported, in part, by cooperative agreement # 90DN0032 from the the Administration on Developmental Disabilities, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration on Developmental Disabilities policy. For further information on this study, please contact: Dana Gilmore, Institute for Community Inclusion, 300 Longwood Avenue, Boston, MA 02115 (617) 355-6506; (617) 355-6956 TTY; ici@a1.tch.harvard.edu

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